Mantram Repetition Program

All Purpose Manual

Our goal is to teach you a simple way to calm the body, quiet the mind and connect you to inner spiritual resources—to attain your highest ideals through peaceful actions.

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Foreward

Mantram Repetition for Relaxation builds upon over 15 years of collaborative efforts between Research Nurse Scientist Jill Bormann, PhD, RN, and VA clinician Madeline Gershwin, MA, RN. Both nurses have committed their careers and their research to bringing Mantram Repetition into the mainstream of health care services for VA staff, Veterans and families.

The "Mantram Repetition for Rapid Relaxation" program in the VA San Diego Health Care System was developed from the work of Easwaran, a successful writer, lecturer and professor of English literature who arrived in the US on a Fulbright exchange in 1959. In 1961, he founded the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in Tomales, California. He moved "from education for degrees to education for living." He taught his 8-point program for 30 years. Mrs. Gershwin enjoyed a twenty year partnership with Sri Eknath Easwaran.

This class teaches three of the points: *Mantram repetition*, *Slowing down* and *One-pointed attention*. Exercises in this manual have been developed from the Research and Instruction in Self-Empowerment (RISE) Institute, also under the guidance of Mrs. Gershwin. The RISE program was originally developed to help people manage the stress of living with HIV/AIDS and gradually became popular with health care providers and the general population.

The concepts and treatments for posttraumatic stress discussed in this *MRP* manual are drawn from the excellent training and conferences provided by the VA Center for Excellence in Stress and Mental Health, San Diego; VA Readjustment Counseling Services (Vet Center 30th Anniversary) and the Navy and Marine Corps Center for Combat Operational Stress Control, Naval Hospital Balboa. The professional writings that inform this manual are found in the References. Many people have supported the Mantram Repetition Program through teaching, manual development and research support. They are part of this history and we wish to acknowledge their contribution here.

Course & Weekly Class Objectives*

Class 1 Define and describe the characteristics of a “mantram” as taught by Eknath Easwaran and how it relates to posttraumatic stress (PTS)

Class 2 Identify ways to choose and use mantram repetition for training attention

Class 3 Describe the relationship between the PTS/stress response, mantram repetition and the “relaxation response”

Class 4 Describe at least two benefits of slowing down versus automatic pilot for stress reduction

Class 5 Describe at least two benefits of one-pointed attention versus multitasking for stress reduction

Class 6 Demonstrate how one-pointed attention and slowing down complement each other for making healthy choices

Class 7 List at least five strategies for making mantram repetition a part of your life

Class 8 Discuss applications of mantram repetition, one-pointed attention and slowing down for overall health and well-being

***Additional overall objective for health care providers:

Explain strategies for describing and teaching mantram repetition, slowing down and one-pointed attention as a stress reduction technique for patients, families and co-workers.

Reading Assignments

Required Reading: Easwaran, E. (2013). *Strength in the storm: Creating calm in difficult times.* Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press.

Please read assignments prior to class.

Class number	*MRP* Manual readings	*Strength in the Storm* readings
Class 1 Date _____		
Class 2 Date _____	Chapters 1 & 2	About This Book, pp. 7 - 16 Chapter 1, pp. 17 - 34, Chapter 4, pp. 81 - 106
Class 3 Date _____	Chapter 3	Chapter 5, pp. 107 - 134
Class 4 Date _____	Chapter 4	Chapter 2, pp. 35 - 58
Class 5 Date _____	Chapter 5	Chapter 3, pp. 58 - 81
Class 6 Date _____	Chapter 6	Chapter 6, pp. 135 - 158 Afterword, pp. 159 - 165 The Eight-Point Program, pp. 166 - 168
Class 7 Date _____	Chapter 7	Review Chapter 5, pp. 106 - 133
Class 8 Date _____	Chapter 8	

Mantram Stories

The following comments were made by participants of mantram repetition classes:

"…instead of shouting or yelling or swearing at somebody in traffic, I just start kind of using my mantram to myself, to bring myself off that cliff. I use it just about every time. I don't catch myself right away but instead of throwing words out the window, I can just sort of say it to myself…I don't drive away from the situation with my blood boiling, all mad and upset, because I realize that I kind of kept myself down and, uh, I don't let myself get to that hyped-up point which is not healthy for me."

"I go to bed. Yeah, it helps me to use that (mantram) instead of just laying there and tossing and turning. I can use my mantram and just repeat my mantram and I fall back asleep."

"…there are little situations dealing with life in general that I try not to worry about like I used to worry about bills, which I think everybody does, but uh…I think taking down time every day and either meditating or doing my mantram when I'm upset it has just helped me work through the days better."

"…if I find myself getting into a bad mood or depressed…how can I say it…when I have no patience with myself and I find myself going back and beat myself up over issues or whatever, I have to…I do my mantram at that point in time…I get more relaxed where I can start thinking other thoughts." (Veteran with PTS)

"When I am really frustrated or in a line or something, I don't let that bother me. I just say my mantram, and before you know it, I am right up at the front of the line. It has really worked for me. I liked it. I really, really liked it."

Mantram Stories (continued)

"I think a lot about VietNam. I had a close friend there who passed away and died there and I think of him a lot and when I do, I think about him for a few minutes and then I say well, you know, I don't want to do this, you know, and I start the mantram and it takes me away from those thoughts."

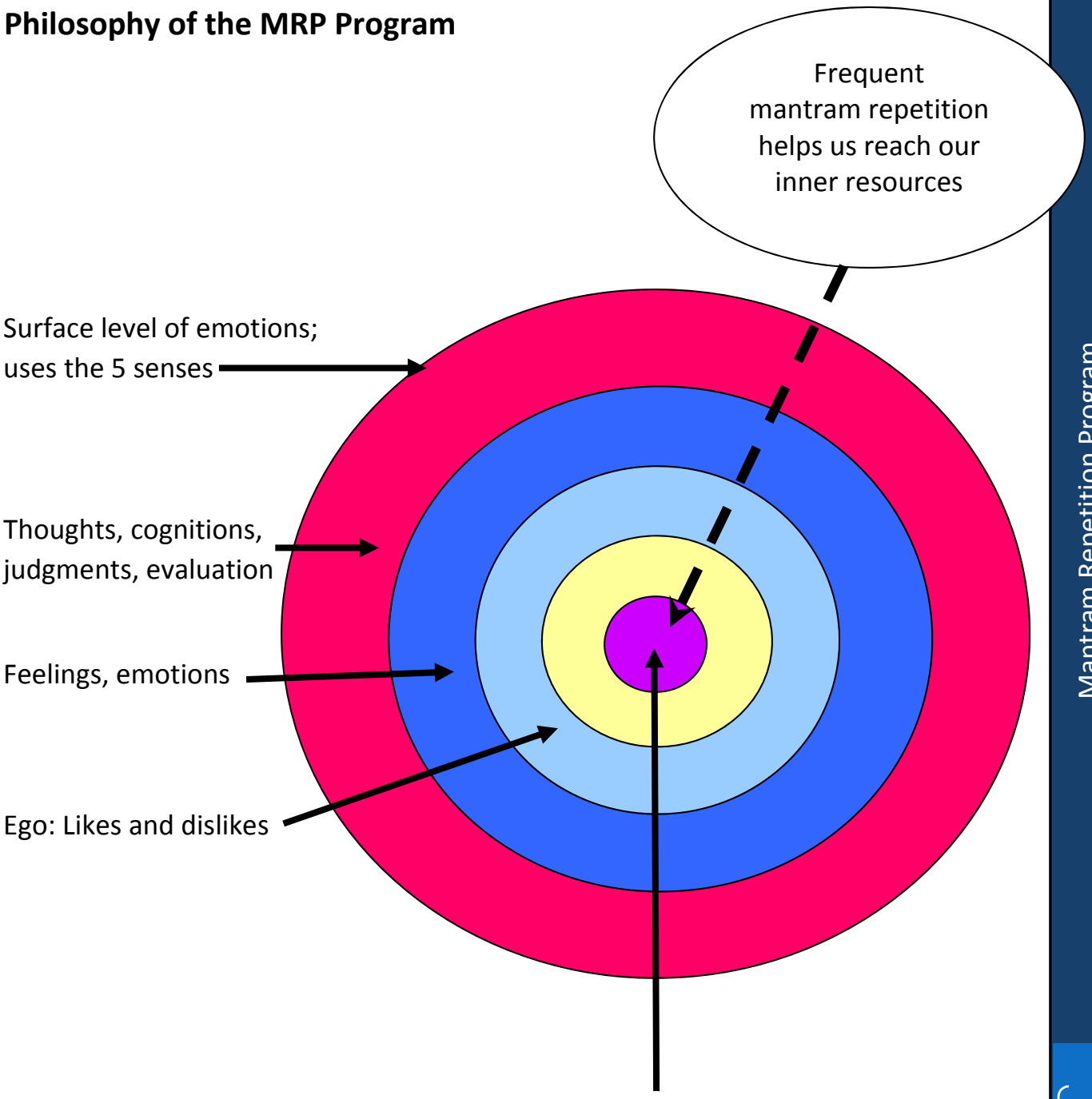
"Sometimes when I got stressed out or other things, like if I was having a really, really bad day, I learned how to deal with the anxiety and stress by using the mantram."

"I'm glad I learned the mantram. I don't stay mad. I'm not angry. I'm not all stressed out. So I try and use the mantram the best I can to relieve the pressure, you know, cause we're like…steam, you know, once you turn the fire up…you got to get rid of it, you know, and the mantram really works well." (Veteran with PTS)

". . . It was helpful when somebody got on my nerves and I would just use my mantram, and I would just repeat it to myself, so that I would not get argumentative or start yelling at someone."

"I was having trouble with nightmares…and those dreams were terrifying. I would wake up shaking and my hands would be clenching to my chest, stopping the blood circulation to my hands. And since I took the second week of class, the mantram started taking over and as of today, I no longer have those scary nightmares anymore." (Adult living with HIV)

Philosophy of the MRP Program



"Inner Core of Resources,"
or natural state of being human:
Peace, Love, Compassion, Kindness, Goodness, Wholeness, Healing, Generosity, Altrusim, Vitality and Patience

GROUP RULES

1. Come on time.

2. Notify instructors if you cannot attend or if you'll be late to class.

3. Be supportive of each other. Be constructive.

4. Allow equal time for all participants. PLEASE, no side bar discussions.

5. No cell phones or pagers – please turn them off.

6. No food; drinks in covered containers.

7. Do the homework.

8. Practice CONFIDENTIALITY. In order to build trust, we must agree that all group discussions stay in the group out of respect for each other.

9. Let instructor(s) know if you have any suggestions or concerns.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Mantram Repetition

> "A steady mind has resources for every crisis. You don't need to analyze the causes, just learn to steady your mind" (p.15).[1]

In today's speeded up world we are often bombarded with daily chaos. Time pressures, deadlines, the demands of family and friends can all contribute to stress in one's life. Stress has an emotional impact on a person and hampers relationships, sleep and personal time. Stress also has a physiological impact affecting a person's health resulting in high blood pressure, heart problems, lowered immune function and diminished mental health. Stress can inhibit a person's quality of life.

The purpose of the Mantram Repetition Program (MRP) is to provide a set of tools to help you manage stress in your life. You will learn *mantram repetition*, *one-pointed attention* and *slowing down* as techniques to create a better quality of life. The next couple of pages give you a general overview of the MRP.

The term mantram, or mantra, is used here to describe a word or phrase chosen by each individual to redirect attention away from troublesome thoughts and to initiate the "relaxation response." With practice, one's attention is focused on a chosen word or phrase that can be repeated silently. It is believed that choosing a spiritual word known as a mantram or holy name, such as "Come Lord Jesus"; "Rama, Rama," which means "joy within"; or "Om Shanti," which means "peace"; has the greatest benefit. The practice of mantram repetition is based on the viewpoint, "You are what you think!"

Program Philosophy

The philosophy of this MRP is that all human beings have an inner reservoir of unlimited resources that are available to them. These inner resources consist of peace, love, compassion, kindness, goodness, wholeness, healing, generosity, altruism, vitality and patience. Mantram repetition can facilitate tapping into these inner resources.

Do not let traditional language become a hurdle for you. The word Lord can represent nature; it can be interpreted as a reference to a personal God, one's Higher Power; or it can simply stand for the deeper resources that lie in the depths of the human personality (see **Appendix A**).

Relaxation Response

Dr. Herbert Benson, a Professor of Medicine at Harvard University and President and Founder of Mind/Body Institute in Massachusetts, demonstrated that repeating a mantram elicits a measurable calming effect, which he popularized as the "relaxation response." He argued that this response acted as a balancing counterpart to the fight-flight response that stress arouses and that can result in organ damage when it becomes chronic.

Benson's studies showed that repeating a mantram over a twenty-minute period resulted in a lowering of heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, and oxygen consumption - all factors associated with a calmer state of mind. In this state, brain waves shift to the more relaxed alpha rhythm, blood flow to the muscles decreases, and blood is sent to the brain and skin, producing a feeling of "rested mental alertness." A recent review of a large body of research concluded that the relaxation response can be helpful in reducing stress and controlling high blood pressure, as well as in combating chronic pain.

Use of a word or phrase to trigger the relaxation response involves two basic steps:

1. Mentally repeating the word, sound, or phrase; and
2. Passively disregarding any other thoughts that intrude.[2,3]

Research has demonstrated that the relaxation response is associated with a generalized decrease in sympathetic nervous system activity, with lower oxygen consumption, respiratory rate, heart rate, and blood pressure, and with increased EEG alpha waves and skin resistance. The relaxation response has been included n behavioral programs designed to help manage pain, anxiety, depression and insomnia.[4,5,6,7,8,9] It has also been associated with decreased physiological tension and anger in postoperative cardiac surgery patients[10] and with increased self-esteem and a tendency toward greater internal locus of control scores in high school students.[11] Moreover, these effects extend to periods of the day other than when practice is initiated.

Outcomes of Relaxation Response[12]

Fight or Flight	Relaxation Response
↑ Heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, metabolism, hyperactivity	↓ Heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, metabolism, brain waves

What is a "Mantram?"

In the United States, the word "mantra" is frequently used to refer broadly to anything that is repeated. The word "mantram," however, is a word or a phrase that connects to spirituality and embodies the highest ideals of a human being. Mantram is the original Sanskrit word that literally means "to cross the mind." Since the emphasis of this MRP is to incorporate and acknowledge spirituality, we make a distinction from the popular use of "mantra" and use, instead, the word "mantram."

A mantram is a word or short phrase found in many spiritual traditions. Users of a mantram, wanting to draw upon its healing and calming effect,

repeat it silently in their minds as often as they can. In the past decade, mantram repetition has been used in various health care programs, with documented medical and psychological benefits. Studies have shown that repeating a mantram reduces both stress-related disorders and feelings of tension and anxiety. Using a mantram can also produce a lowered state of physiological arousal and effectively treat emotional disorders.[13]

Research on brain activity using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) indicates that meditation, such as repeating a mantram and passively ignoring other thoughts, activates parts of the brain involved in attention and arousal.[14] In other words, just as you increase physical muscle mass by repeatedly lifting weights, you can increase your ability to concentrate and focus attention by repeating a mantram, which results in a state of rested mental alertness. This allows one to make better choices in stressful situations.

This MRP differs from Transcendental Meditation (TM) in that it is not tied to a particular time or place. TM is practiced by repeating a mantra word for twenty minutes in a special place twice a day. In contrast, the mantram in this program is repeated silently to oneself throughout the day. It can be repeated *at any time; anywhere we happen to be* to halt the stress response. Thus, the mantram is more portable and can be there when you really need it. In this program, the mantram is not used as the focus of meditation practice, although it could be used that way. Also, a mantram is deliberately short, no more than a few words at most, so that it can be accessed quickly, at any time, even in the grip of a strong emotion like anger or fear.

Choosing a Mantram

When choosing a mantram, select a word or phrase from the recommended list on page 10. Give it a try for a few weeks or months. Then decide whether it is a tool that speaks to your own condition. You should choose a word or phrase with care, taking into account your religious or

spiritual interests (or lack of them), your personal reactions to the words and the practical significance of the words. *Do not make up your own.* Choose a word that comes from a traditional source. Such words carry a kind of transforming "charge" from having been repeated by millions of people over the centuries.

Many people have reported almost immediate, and sometimes surprising, benefits from using a mantram. Sleeping better, coping better with pain and discomfort, and even managing negative moods and anger better are some of the ways people report having success with mantram repetition. Still, others have had problems with the mantram, especially in the beginning. It looks too strange to them, or even simplistic. Repeating the same word over and over seems mechanical, they have told us, or just too "weird." Yet when they have suspended their skepticism for a while, they have often found beneficial results. Because there are no harmful side effects and no great investment in time or money, the risk is low and beneficial results may follow.

Others have used their mantrams to help them cope with long periods in clinic waiting rooms, people cutting them off in traffic and the minor annoyances of daily life. They have told us that before they took the course, these experiences left them angry and frustrated. Repeating a mantram helped them remain calmer and more in control of their reactions.

One person in class named Bob told us that at work he easily flies off the handle, but repeating his mantram has helped him remain calm and be more patient with others. Repeating a mantram has even helped some endure the suffering, or even deaths, of their friends or family. In any event, the mantram can work for you, too, but you need to use it regularly for a while before making a judgment.

On the next page there is a list of some of the most popular mantrams from all around the world.

List of Recommended Mantrams*

Mantrams (pronunciation)	**Description**
Om mani padme hum (Ohm mah-nee pahd-may hume)	An invocation to the jewel (Self), in the lotus of the heart
Namo Butsaya (Nah-mo Boot-see-yah)	I bow to the Buddha
My God and My All	St. Francis of Assisi's phrase
Maranatha (Mah-rah-nah-tha)	Lord of the Heart (Aramaic)
Kyrie Eleison (Kir-ee-ay Ee-lay-ee-sone)	Lord have mercy
Christe Eleison (Kreest-ay Ee-lay-ee-sone)	Christ have mercy
Jesus, Jesus	Son of God
Hail Mary or Ave Maria	Mother of Jesus
Lord Jesus Christ son of god, have mercy on me	Jesus Prayer
Rama (Rah-mah)	Eternal joy within (Gandhi's mantram)
Om Namah Shivaya (Ohm Nah-mah Shee-vah-yah)	Invocation to beauty and fearlessness
Om Prema (Ohm Pray-Mah)	A call for universal love
Om Shanti (Ohm Shawn-tee)	Invocation to eternal peace
Shalom (Shah-lome)	Peace, completeness
So Hum (So Hum)	I am that Self within
Barukh Atah Adonoi (Bah-rookh At-tah Ah-doh-nigh)	Blessed art Thou, King of the Universe
Ribono Shel Olam (Ree-boh-no Shel O-lahm)	Master of the Universe
Bismallah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim (Beese-mah-lah ir-Rah-mun ir-Rah-heem)	In the name of the merciful, the compassionate
O Wakan Tanka (Wah-Kahn Tahn-Kah)	Great Spirit

*Again, do not let traditional language become a hurdle for you. The word “God” can be interpreted as a reference to a supreme force, to the divine within, or to one’s higher power, for example.

Exercises, Experiments and Homework

As preparation for week 2, read Chapters 1 – 2, select a mantram from page 10 and practice repeating your mantram.

Read About This Book, pp. 7 - 16; Chapter 1, pp. 17 - 34; and Chapter 4, pp. 81 - 106 in *Strength in the Storm*.

List situations, symptoms, or behaviors you would like to manage better. At the end of this program, revisit this list and see if you have made any improvements in managing these situations.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Chapter 2: Choosing, Using, (and Tracking) Mantram Practice

> "The repetition of the mantram is venerable, universal, proven. It has been verified by the experience of millions of men and women everywhere, in every age. True, mantrams have different sounds and come from diverse traditions. But essentially they all do the same thing: turn us away from our dependency on what lies outside - money and things, awards and position, pleasure and comfort, selfish relationships and power - to the serenity and goodness within our own being" (p.42).[1]

Training your attention is the core of stress management. It helps you to slow down, to focus and ultimately to transform the way you think. A mantram can be used at anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances. It is a kind of rapid focusing tool that you can use to regain your composure when you're stressed and to buy you time *before you react*.

The mantram is easy to use and doesn't require much discipline. Yet, it has proven to be a powerful tool for dealing with the emotional stresses and challenges that accompany illness, the workplace and much of modern life.

Can I Use a Word That Is Not on the List?

We suggest choosing a word from the list because they have weathered the test of time and have been beneficial for many people throughout the ages. Some recent research studies have indicated that spiritual words are more effective than secular phrases for reducing stress related symptoms.[2]

In a research study of 84 college students, those who repeated a spiritual phrase such as "God is love" demonstrated greater improvements in health than those who repeated either a secular phrase or practiced passive muscle relaxation. They were measured on anxiety, mood, spiritual health, spiritual experiences and pain tolerance. Results indicated that the spiritual group had significant decreases in anxiety; more positive mood, spiritual health, and spiritual experiences; and tolerated pain almost twice as long as the other two groups.

Wachholtz and Pargament replicated their study in a sample of people with migraine headaches. They found that the spiritual meditation group reported a significant decrease in the number of migraine headaches, an increase in pain tolerance, and had significant positive improvements in mental health, headache-related self-efficacy, and spiritual health. They concluded that "spiritually-focused meditation may offer enhanced health effects compared to secular forms of meditation." [3]

Wolf and Abell[4] conducted a randomized trial comparing adults assigned to one of three groups:

1. intervention chanting a traditional mantra with 31 people,
2. placebo chanting a nonsensical mantra with 31 people, and
3. a no-treatment control with 31 people.

This study looked at the effects of chanting a mantra as compared to chanting a non-spiritual phrase measuring stress, depression, and the Vedic Personality Inventory[5] with subscales on enlightenment, passion and inertia. Participants in both mantra groups were taught how to chant mantras aloud using a bracelet of 109 beads to count repetitions. They chanted while sitting or walking and gave chanting their full attention. They were assessed at pre- and post-intervention, and 4 weeks follow-up. The traditional mantra group had significant reductions in stress, depression, and inertia; and improvements in

enlightenment compared to either placebo or control. There were also significant baseline to 4-week follow-up effects on stress and inertia in the traditional mantra group.

These studies provide evidence that traditional mantrams have a greater benefit than secular or non-traditional ones.

How to Use Your Mantram

Silently repeat the mantram throughout the day as frequently as you can. It does not matter how many repetitions in each session - repeat it once or fifty times. Just repeat it often! Begin your practice by repeating the mantram before you go to sleep every night and even when napping. Using the mantram when you are in a relaxed state allows the words to connect to the physiological state of being relaxed. Then when you repeat the mantram in a stressed state you are drawing from the mantram and its connection to the relaxed state. Easwaran says it best:

> "The mantram is most effective when we say it silently, in the mind, with as much concentration as possible…I recommend repeating the mantram silently and not dwelling on tune and rhythm and such matters. Anything which takes attention away from the mantram itself, such as counting, or worrying or intonation, or connecting the mantram with physiological processes, only weakens the mantram's effect (p. 6)."[6]

Stages of Mantram Practice

In our many years of doing this we have found that people need to *experience the effects* or benefits for themselves. It also helps to know that there are three stages of mantram practice:

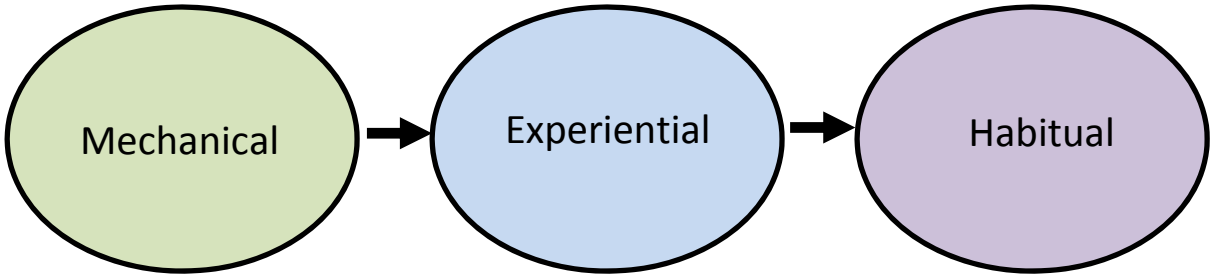
Stage 1. MECHANICAL: Initially, repeating a mantram over and over may seem silly or monotonous. We notice our minds telling us all sorts of things so that we'll stop repeating it. It is okay to have a healthy bit of skepticism but continue to repeat your mantram beyond any critical thoughts and really give it a serious try. "The mantram is a force, and in order for this force to work, it must be working from deep inside. At first, we will be repeating the mantram only at a surface level of the mind. But if we repeat it with regularity and sustained enthusiasm, it will take root deep in our consciousness, until it becomes as natural to us as breathing" (p.354).[7]

Stage 2. EXPERIENTIAL: After a few weeks, people begin to experience a greater awareness of their thought processes. Some say, "I never knew my mind was so agitated or speeded up!" Others say, "I think I am getting worse!" This is what we call the "experiential stage" and the beginning discovery that we are not our minds. With diligent practice and non-judgmental compassion for oneself, mantram repetition begins to take hold deeper in our consciousness and we recognize that it does have an effect of calming focus.

Mantram practice isn't a panacea. We still undergo the stress and pain that accompany life and illness. But regular use of a mantram can help us keep

balance in difficult circumstances by reducing mood swings to more manageable proportions and by bolstering confidence in handling the stresses that life and illness bring. We begin to notice that we get frustrated less easily and recover from angry feelings or irritability more quickly. These changes are subtle, yet noticeable.

Stage 3. HABITUAL: Over time, mantram repetition becomes a habit that reminds us daily of our "highest ideals" of the human experience. It taps into our capacity to be kind, calm and loving. Somehow, the sound or meaning of a mantram phrase resonates with our inner highest good.



Ways to Use Your Mantram

While waiting

- For a job interview, or in a grocery or ticket line
- For the bus, plane, train, taxi, or other transportation
- For a doctor's appointment or lab tests
- For people who are late

To redirect wandering attention back to routine or "everyday" tasks such as:

- Washing dishes, sweeping, vacuuming, dusting

- Raking, gardening, watering plants
- Brushing teeth, combing hair, bathing or showering
- Digging, hauling, painting

While exercising

- Walking or jogging, swimming or bike riding
- Doing any repeated exercise

When dealing with annoying situations

- Getting cut off in traffic
- Tackling an unpleasant job
- Struggling with insomnia or nightmares
- Dealing with difficult people
- While on hold on the telephone
- When bored

Other times

- Before meals or going to sleep
- While in the presence of a dying person
- While dealing with pain, illness, or surgery
- When dealing with likes or dislikes
- For ruminating thoughts and little compulsions or addictions

To manage unwanted emotions

- Depression
- Fear
- Resentment
- Greed
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Impatience
- Jealousy
- Anger
- Guilt
- Irritability

Exercise: My List of Annoying Things
or
Situations I Want to Handle Better

List the things, people, events, or situations that annoy you, upset you, or anger you. These are situations you would like to cope with better. List as many as you can think of and keep adding to this list every week. Choose one or two items from this list and begin using your mantram to help you cope with them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Using a Counter and Tracking Logs to Record Frequency of Mantram Practice (Optional)

This week, we suggest that you try to keep track of how often you remember to initiate mantram repetition. One method is to get a counter (wrist golf watch or lap counter) and record on tracking sheet (see page 20) how frequently you remember to repeat your mantram every day. You can record each series of repeating your mantram, not every single time that you repeat it.

For example, you may repeat your mantram while walking from your house to your car or the bus, but then you start thinking of all you have to do for the day. After going over your mental list, you remember to repeat your mantram again. Each time you remember to initiate repetitions, push the knob on your counter and give yourself credit for remembering. At the end of the day, write the number on your tracking log. Keep your counter close by and before going to bed, set it back to zero.

If you remember to repeat your mantram before going to bed, or at any time during the night, then write "yes" in the box that indicates "before sleep." If you did not remember to use it at night, then write a "no" in the box. Keep a tally of your practice and bring your sheet to class. It is beneficial to do this several weeks in a row to develop a habit of repeating your mantram. Keeping track by using a counter and tracking log can help.

If for some reason, you fail, don't be discouraged or give up. Just be curious about what is happening that keeps you from attaining your goal. Be kind and patient with yourself. Changing life long habits is very hard to do, so we must be kind to and patient with ourselves in order to have success.

Come to class even if you haven't done the exercises and we can discuss ways to help and encourage you. Tracking your use of your mantram will help you create a new habit that may enhance your life. Our research shows that there is a direct correlation between higher frequency of mantram repetition and lower levels of anxiety.[8] In other words, the more you practice, the better you feel.

SAMPLE

Tracking Log for Mantram Use*

Name: *Chuck* Dates of this week: *4/27- 5/3*

Days:	*Friday*	*Saturday*	*Sunday*	*Monday*	*Tuesday*	*Wednesday*	*½ of Thursday*
Dates:	*4/27*	*4/28*	*4/29*	*4/30*	*5/1*	*5/2*	*5/3*
Number of Times Remembered per Day	*11*	*14*	*5*	*10*	*8*	*4*	*6*
Used for Sleep? **Yes or No**	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*

Comments: *It really helps me fall asleep, if I can remember to use it.*

It helped me this week while going to the dentist.

*For a blank copy of this form see **Appendix B**.

Exercises, Experiments and Homework

Practice using the mantram at different times and in different places.

Optional: Track the number of times you remember to repeat the mantram (using the counter and daily log) and try writing the mantram.

As preparation for week 3, read Chapter 3 in this manual and continue to add to "My List of Annoying Things" on page 18.

Read Chapter 5, pp. 107 - 134 in *Strength in the Storm*.

Chapter 3: The Stress Response and Mantram Repetition

We live in a fast-paced world. Technology has made many beneficial changes to our lives. For example, clothing can be washed in a washer, a meal can be cooked in minutes, loved ones can communicate via the Internet or on the phone between meetings at work and business can be conducted with people in various places in the world via remote teleconferencing. There are many positive gains from our technological advancements.

However, these innovations have added an abundance of stress to modern life. Cell phones ringing, pagers beeping, email, phone calls, text messaging, instant messaging, driving in heavy traffic, the scrolling news line on the bottom of the television screen - all of these are additional stressors that the human body did not have to cope with a hundred years ago. Often these additional stressors activate the fight or flight part of the brain, thereby overworking our sympathetic nervous systems.

Over-activation of the stress response has a long-term impact on the body and mind. People have reported feeling over-tired, feeling irritated and having difficulty sleeping. Increased symptoms in response to life stressors are often out of our control. Other than moving to the woods and becoming a hermit, we have several options - we can take some measures to decrease stress-inducing activities. We can begin to use the mantram to provide a buffer between the external world and ourselves, or both.

The Problem and the Power of the Mind

The main problem of the mind is that it often has too much speed and too little direction. Our thoughts do not normally follow the fixed, logical patterns we'd like to believe. They more often come in loops and whirls, sometimes careening in several directions at the same time. Follow your

thoughts for a moment. Watch them while you're jogging or brushing your teeth, or right now, while reading this. Notice how easily your thoughts scatter - snatches of an old Beatles tune, a conversation from the night before, the president's statement on the Middle East, or even the final scene from the movie, "Casablanca," might pop in - none of which has anything to do with the task at hand. On it goes.

Now focus your thoughts. Try to fix them for just a minute on some detail before you: the color of the wallpaper, the texture of the paper in your hand. How long can you hold the thought before it skips away? A minute? (You're doing well.) Half a minute? Ten seconds?

How long was it before you found your mind raising irrelevant questions: "What was the color of that wallpaper? Did I remember to invite Charles?" Try to focus, in spite of the distractions, and watch as your mind may snub even your best efforts to fix it on one thought. You can ask yourself, who is in charge here? It may become apparent that no one is in charge, and that the mind has a mind of its own. You can tell your leg to move, and it will; your hand to scratch a certain itch, and it does. Why can't you tell your mind what to do? Why so little control?

Automatic Thinking and Directed Attention

Obsessive moods and compulsive behaviors are both signals that your thinking is not under your control. ("If only I could stop thinking about it!") The helplessness you may feel in the face of a self-destructive mood may have a powerful compulsive element to it related to the way you think.

Norman Cousins writes about two kinds of thinking.[1] The first he calls "reflective" thinking, which is a form of ***directed attention***, where we choose what we will think about and are more or less in control of our thoughts. Then there is "reflexive" or ***automatic*** thinking, which is far more common. Here our thoughts react to whatever internal or external

stimuli happen by. We shouldn't confuse this with creative "free association," which a writer might choose to use as a source for ideas. In automatic thinking, we are not choosing at will. We are merely reacting to whatever catches our attention - sights, sounds, fears, regrets. In advanced stages, we may have little influence at all over our thoughts and are left feeling out of control.

Aimless, automatic thinking is a major obstacle for making changes in our attitudes, moods and behaviors. As our thinking becomes automatic, we lose the ability to choose how we think, feel and even act. Our attention is captured by the sights and sounds, the worries and interests that come our way, and so we drift. We lose the capacity to make choices.

This describes the condition in which many of us find ourselves. How did we get into this state? Is it because we're morally deficient? Weak? No. We're simply products of a relentless conditioning that shapes us, in countless hidden ways, to do more and more, faster and faster. We're taught to be like this. We're praised and rewarded when we're successful. We've learned it. And we can unlearn it.

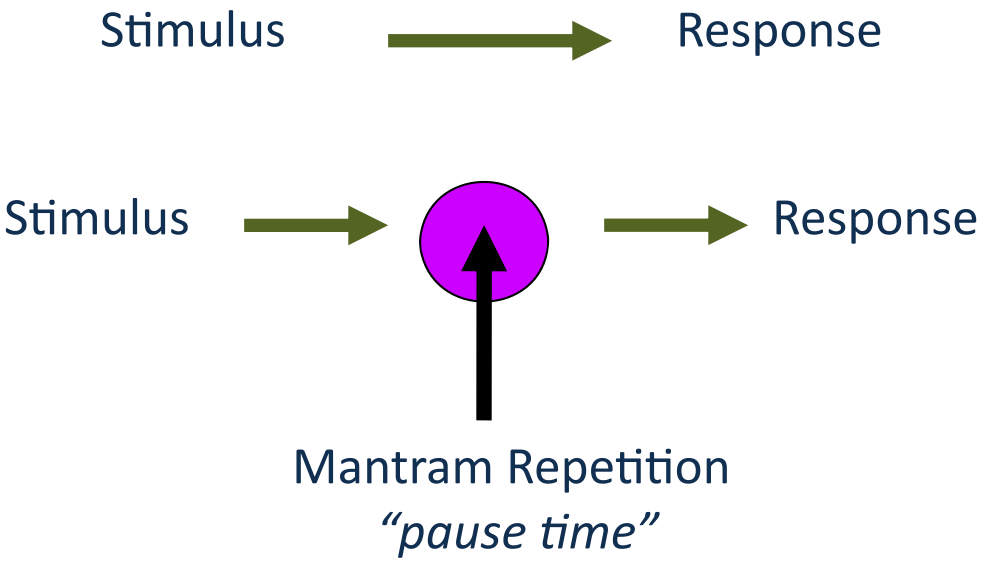
Retraining the Mind

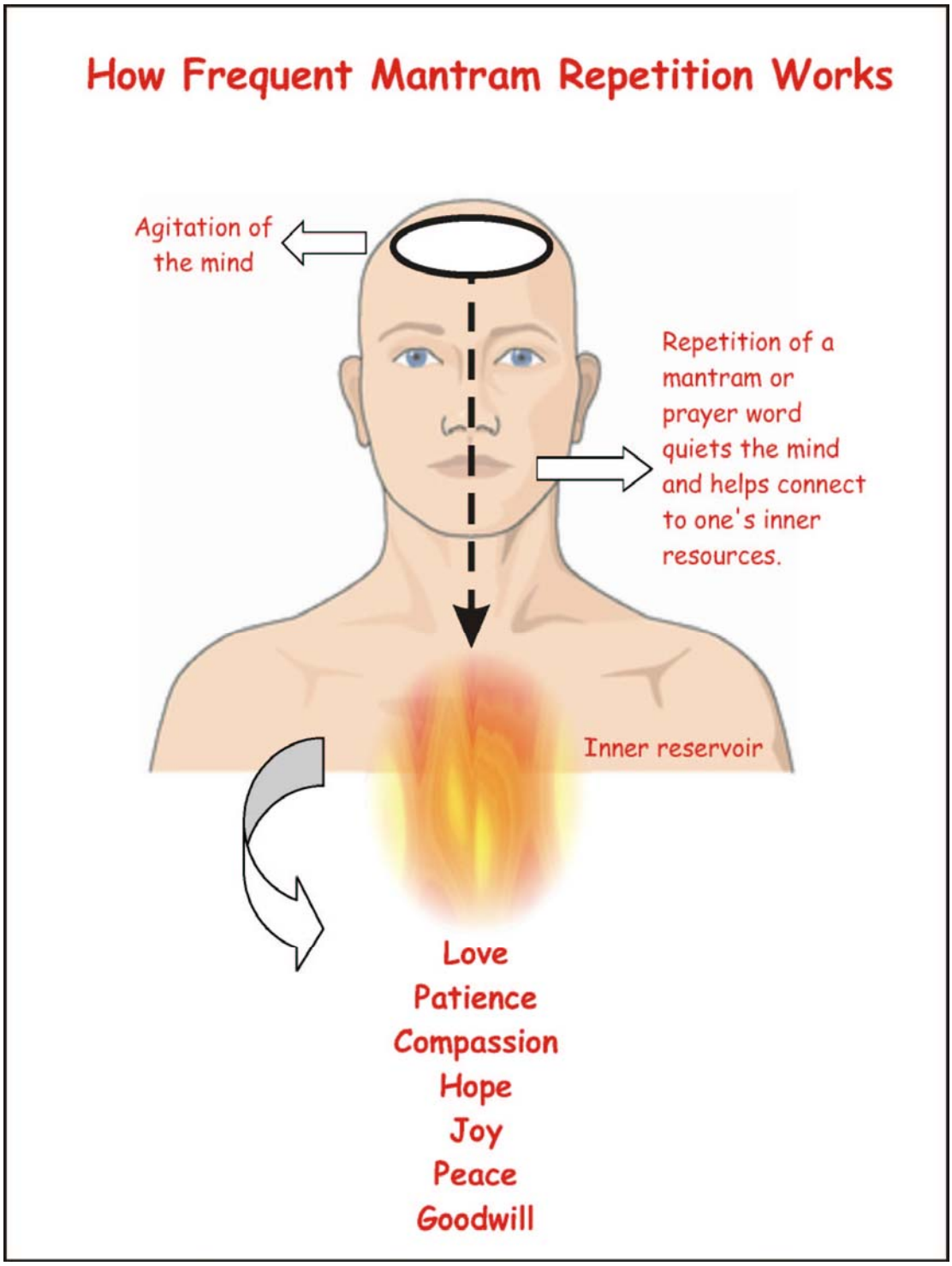
We have been conditioned to be reactive. However, repeating a mantram, slowing down, and directing attention can break down this conditioning. These tools are designed to get you off automatic pilot. They can help you slow down and refocus by taking direct aim at the speeded up, multi-focused thought factory of the mind.

But let us be clear. The "problem of the mind" does not imply any lack of mental capacity. Intelligent people are victims of compulsive attitudes and behavior as much as anyone. It is not the lack of mental energy that turns the mind toward unhealthy patterns, but the reverse: it is the mind's formidable powers - out of control - that cause the problems.

The mind has a mind of its own and can get stuck in patterns of negative thinking and emotions.

Changing behavioral patterns begins with the mind, with tools designed to help you train your attention and recapture its focus. In order to change and learn to manage the accompanying feelings, you must retrain the mind and the way it thinks and influences your feelings and behaviors. You may find that, in time, you can begin to direct your attention where you want it to go, or away from where you don't want it to go. You can then choose more freely and with better judgment about how you will think, respond and live. This training brings a new freedom, and with it, a renewed sense of personal power.



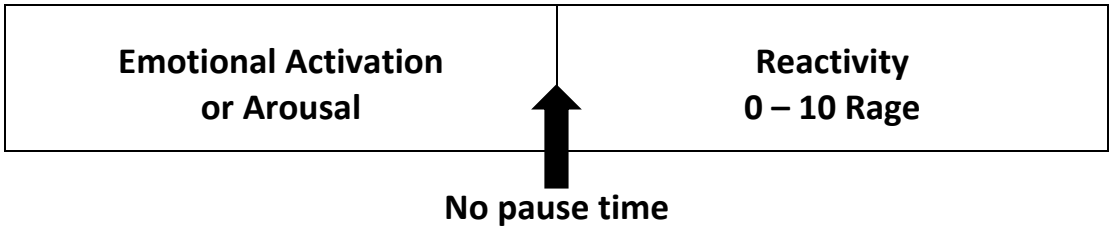

How Frequent Mantram Repetition Works
Agitation of the mind
Repetition of a mantram or prayer word quiets the mind and helps connect to one's inner resources.
Inner reservoir
Love
Patience
Compassion
Hope
Joy
Peace
Goodwill

Using Mantram Repetition for Reducing Reactivity

Some people have the ability to choose how they want to react to a situation. They seem able at any time to respond gracefully under pressure.

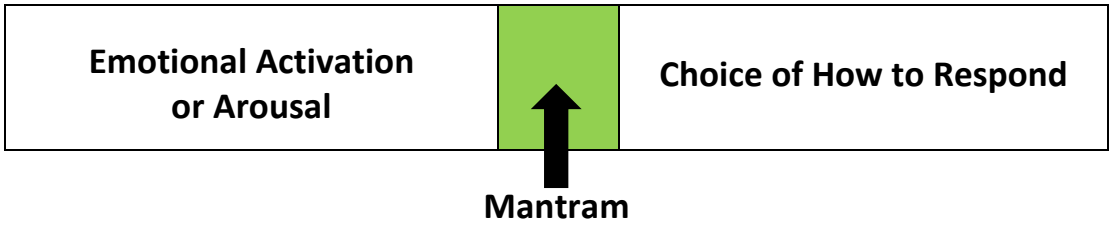
The Rest of Us

The rest of us are not born with this ability to respond to every situation with the most optimal expression or feeling. When there is a triggering event in our lives, we have no pause time between the event and our reaction.



The Mantram Is a Buffer Between Emotional Activity and Reactivity

The repetition of the mantram allows us to develop an ability to have some breathing room between the rest of the world and ourselves. When events happen we get the benefit of having repeated the mantram often, creating a buffer between us and the triggering event.



Repeating a mantram – with use – will allow you enough space between the triggering event and your reaction to enable you to choose how you want to respond to a situation.

Exercise: Writing

We have included a writing component because it helps us learn better. People have a variety of learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Some people learn best by seeing (visual learners), some by hearing (auditory learners), and some by doing (kinesthetic learners). Therefore, we have incorporated a section on writing both to facilitate the kinesthetic learner and to reinforce the mantram in another learning modality.

Please try to write a half a page a day this week. You may create your own mantram journal or just use any piece of paper. Try it!

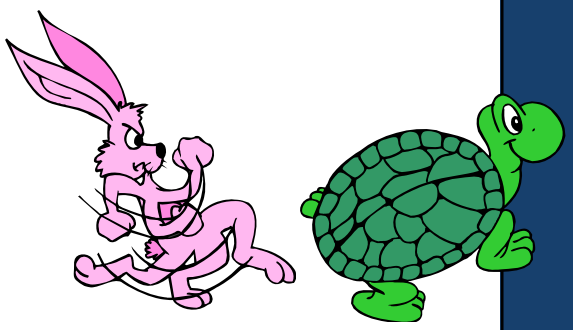
Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama

Exercises, Experiments and Homework

Practice using the mantram **when you don't need it** as well as for managing fear, anxiety, anger, hyperactivity, insomnia, nightmares. Try taking a "mantram walk" this week. Write your mantram.

As preparation for week 4, read Chapter 4 in this manual and do slowing down exercises on pp. 33 - 35 and 37 before class.

Read Chapter 2, pp. 34 - 58 in *Strength in the Storm*.



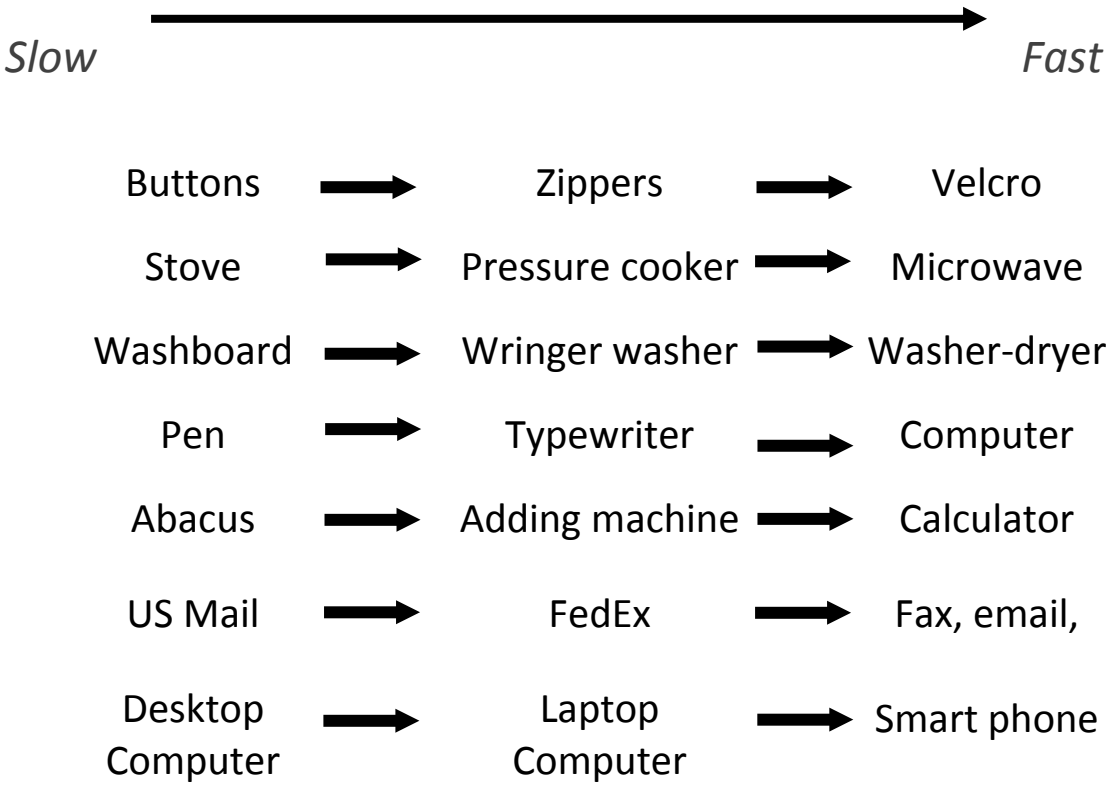
Chapter 4: Slowing Down Versus Automatic Pilot

Setting Priorities and Reducing Stress and Friction Caused by Hurry

Stress is a major complaint of people in our modern world. As mentioned earlier, being bombarded with tons of information - in addition to having too much to do - can flood the system and leave a person overwhelmed. Often, when the body's alert system is on most of the time, the results are fatigue, irritability and difficulty sleeping. The funny thing is that we often do not see the obvious answer: to do less. The task of re-evaluating what is important and eliminating the un-important things has so much value.

Another contributor to modern stress is the lack of "pause time." Due to our time-saving technology, what used to take us 30 minutes now only takes 5 minutes. Do we sit back and relax for those extra 25 minutes? Most likely, we do not! Instead, we immediately move on to the next task because we value productivity. This denies us of any "pause time" for rest or reflection; time to enjoy the moment or become aware of our surroundings. The table on the next page illustrates how modern conveniences have also conveniently robbed us of natural breaks or pauses throughout the day.

The "Vanishing Pause"



In our society there is a continual push to move forward and progress. These are good qualities if they are also balanced with a regular assessment of one's priorities. If a person's quality of life is suffering because of an inner drive to be successful or productive, then perhaps a re-evaluation of what is important is in order. Easwaran emphasizes the need for slowing down:

> "An obsession with time has been so worked into our social system that we scarcely notice we do not have time to love. Everywhere the slogan is 'Hurry, hurry, hurry.' Yet to be aware of the needs of others, to spend time with others, to speak and act with thoughtfulness, patience, and consideration, we must have time" (¶11)[1] - a lot more time than most of us are willing to give at present.

The act of slowing down is a way to remain in the present. Rather than ruminating about the past or worrying about the future, slowing down can allow a person to be in the present. Present-centered awareness is also called *intentional* living. It enables one to harness the energy previously spent on the past or future and focus it on handling the problems of today.

A wise person once noted, "The past is gone. You can do nothing about it. The future is not yet here so there is no need to worry about it. The only gift of life you have is now. That's why they call this gift of life, our present."[2] In addition to resolving problems, present-centered awareness opens the possibility to enjoy each day. Rather than reacting to the overload of information, one can reflect and act in a more compassionate and sensitive way.

When a person lives in a speeded up way, social pleasantries are often overlooked. Taking time to check in with co-workers can seem burdensome and time consuming. Loved ones get overlooked because business concerns take center stage. A sense of compassion and human connectedness is lost when life is speeded up. As Mother Teresa once said,

> "I think the world today is upside - down and is suffering so much, because there is so very little love in the homes and in family life. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other; there is no time to enjoy each other" (p.37).[3]

A speeded up lifestyle not only hampers our relationships but also impairs our physical health. Many people who are speeded up have a "Type A" personality. The traits of this personality type are always being in a hurry, feeling pressured for time, and being aggressive and impatient. Often those with "Type A" personalities are so impatient that they interrupt others in conversation, unable to wait for them to finish speaking. And waiting for anyone - a bank teller, a waiter or waitress, a driver ahead of them in traffic - is excruciatingly painful. The stress that is incurred from living this lifestyle often leads to physical problems including heart disease, hypertension and high cholesterol (p. 98-101).[4] In addition, trying to fit too many things into a day leaves one rushed, not allowing time for courteous interactions often leaving one slightly underprepared and late (p.106-109).[5]

Is Hurry a Problem in Your Life?
Signs and Signals of Hurry Sickness

On these two pages is a list of activities to help you determine how speeded up you are. Circle all the ones that apply to you. Then add up how many you circled = _____.

(We will discuss this in class.)

Driving

- You drive faster than you used to.
- You get speeding tickets.
- You are instantly angry at drivers who don't zip out of intersections when the light changes.
- You speed through yellow lights.
- You change lanes and jockey for position.
- You rage at the gross incompetence of other drivers.

Eating

- You eat in the office while working.
- You prefer to eat alone and quickly.
- You finish meals before everyone else.
- You eat more food and in bigger bites than you used to.
- You've gained weight over the past year or two.

Communication Style

- You don't take time for pleasant, easygoing chats with others.
- You frequently interrupt others rather than really listening to what they say.
- When others hesitate, you quickly fill in words or sentences for them in order to speed up the conversation.

- You carry on conversations while reading the paper, opening the mail, or watching TV.

Leisure Activity

- You spend less time having fun than you used to.
- It seems that time off isn't worth it because you have so much work to do.
- Many once-good friendships have died of neglect because you haven't taken the time to stay in touch.
- You take less vacation time.
- When you sit still, you find yourself becoming uncomfortable.
- You no longer have interesting hobbies.

Relationship to the Pace of Life

- You walk up "up" escalators and down "down" escalators.
- You can't stand waiting, even in a short line.
- You become irritated when elevators don't come immediately.
- You become frustrated with anyone who is a beginner at anything.
- You'd rather do things yourself because no one else moves fast enough for you.

Feelings Within

- You often feel out of control of your life and of all you have to do.
- Your dominant feelings are anger and low-level depression.
- Your sense of humor has disappeared.
- You rarely feel happiness or joy like you used to.
- You feel out of touch with your spiritual self.

Experimental Practice:
Now, choose at least one or two things per day from this list on which you can practice your SLOWING DOWN. Keep a list. Notice the difference.

Are You a Speedaholic?

Rate how well each of the following sentences describes you - *perfectly, somewhat,* or *not at all*. Then add up your answers to find out if you're moving too fast for your own good.

These statements describe me →	***Perfectly***	***Somewhat***	***Not at all***
1. I always eat fast.	2	1	0
2. I talk rapidly.	2	1	0
3. I often put words into other people's mouths.	2	1	0
4. I find it frustrating if people speak too slowly.	2	1	0
5. I almost always feel pressed for time.	2	1	0
6. I don't like to linger over a meal.	2	1	0
7. I often feel harried at work.	2	1	0
8. I often push the "close door" button on elevators.	2	1	0
9. I can feel my blood pressure climb in slow checkout lines.	2	1	0
10. I follow the car in front of me closely when driving.	2	1	0
11. I sometimes push the "walk" button at intersections repeatedly.	2	1	0
12. I get very frustrated when people are late.	2	1	0
13. I often do two things at once to save time.	2	1	0
14. I get restless if I have to sit still.	2	1	0
15. I feel as if I'm wasting time if I do only one thing at a time.	2	1	0
16. I get crazy when people ahead of me are walking too slowly.	2	1	0

SCORING:

24 to 32: Your fast ways are very likely compromising your health and well-being.

16 to 23: You're a borderline speedaholic. You'd enjoy life more if you slowed down.

0 to 15: Bravo! You're taking life at a moderate pace!

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Tips for Slowing Down

1. To guard against hurrying throughout the day, start the day earlier by waking up earlier, even if it is only 15 minutes. Experience what it is like not being rushed in the morning.

2. Allow yourself time to get to every engagement a little early.

3. Don't try to do everything you can or even everything you want to. Keep sight of the most important things each day, and use the mantram to remind yourself to keep coming back to them.

4. Whenever you find yourself beginning to speed up during the day, repeat your mantram to help you slow down. This will help you to cultivate patience.

5. Don't rush those you live and work with. Give them time and you will be giving yourself time as well.

6. Cultivate personal relationships in all your activities. It will help to reverse the depersonalization of our world.

7. Simplify your life so you do not have more than you can realistically do. Start by listing your activities. Then prune the list, striking out anything that is not truly necessary and anything that is not beneficial.

"It is important not to confuse slowness with sloth, which breeds carelessness, procrastination, and general inefficiency. In slowing down attend meticulously to details. Give your very best even to the smallest undertaking" (¶1).[6]

Making Priorities to Help in Slowing Down

(This is a homework activity. Please complete it before coming to class.)

1. Make a list of the all the activities and responsibilities you typically have in a week's time. Include time spent with family or friends as well as work, recreation, or other meetings and events. Take a moment to review this list and determine which things are absolute priorities that you want to keep in your life. These are things you highly value or that bring joy, satisfaction, or meaning into your life. **Circle them.**

   To help you with examples, please see **Appendix C**.

2. Next, identify the things in your life that you no longer want or things that are no longer necessary, useful, or meaningful to you. With a pen or pencil, CROSS OUT as many of the unnecessary entries as you can.

Exercises, Experiments and Homework

Notice where and when you are speeded up. Then choose activities to practice slowing down.

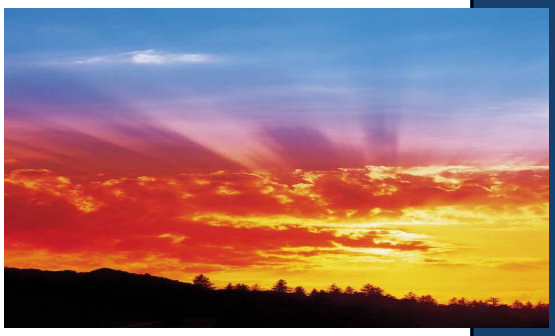
Continue tracking your mantram use.

Write your mantram.

Take a “mantram walk” this week.

As preparation for week 5, read Chapter 5 in this manual.

Read Chapter 3, pp. 59 - 81, in *Strength in the Storm*.



Chapter 5: One-Pointed Attention Versus Multitasking

The act of slowing down lends itself to the next concept, one-pointed attention. In slowing down, one creates more time within the moment and one-pointed attention allows one to harness energy that would usually be diverted to multiple tasks, and completely focus it on the task at hand. The following narrative reflects the many ways our attention can be split.

Age Activated Attention Deficit Disorder

"This is how it goes: I decide to wash the car. I start toward the garage and notice the mail on the table. Ok, I'm going to wash the car, but first I'm going to go through the mail. I lay the car keys down on the desk, discard the junk mail and I notice the trashcan is full. Ok, I'll just put the bills on my desk and take the trashcan out, but since I'm going to be near the mailbox anyway, I'll pay these few bills first. Now, where is my checkbook? Oops, there's only one check left. My extra checks are in my desk. Oh, there's the soda I was drinking. I'm going to put my soda away from the computer. Oh maybe I'll pop it into the fridge to keep it cold for a while. I head towards the kitchen and my flowers catch my eye, they need some water. I set the cola on the counter and uh-oh! There are my glasses. I was looking for them all morning! I'd better put them away first. I fill a container with water and head for the flowerpots - Aaaaaagh! Someone left the TV remote in the kitchen. We'll never think to look in the kitchen tonight when we want to watch television so I'd better put it back in the family room where it belongs. I splash some water into the pots and onto the floor, I throw the remote onto a soft cushion on the sofa and I head back down the hall trying to figure out what I was going to do?

End of Day: The car isn't washed, the bills are unpaid, the soda is sitting on the kitchen counter, the flowers are half watered, the checkbook still only has one check in it and I can't seem to find my

car keys! When I try to figure out how come nothing got done today, I'm baffled because I know I was busy all day long" (p.196)![1]

Multitasking is emphasized in our society as a valuable asset, but as the previous story illustrates, it often results in the initiation of multiple projects that never get finished. Many view multitasking as a valuable job skill without realizing that when multitasking, it often takes longer for one to finish each task. Research also demonstrates that when multitasking, the brain uses less of its capacity.

Multitasking Drains Brain

Marcel Just, PhD, Director of the Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, conducted a research study that demonstrated that the brain appears to have a finite amount of space for tasks requiring attention.[2] When people try to drive in heavy traffic and talk, for example, the working power of the brain does not double. It decreases. People performing two demanding tasks simultaneously do neither one as well as they do each alone.

Another study at Stanford University found that the most persistent multitaskers performed badly in a variety of tasks. They didn't focus as well as non-multitaskers. They are more distractible and they are weaker at changing tasks and at organizing information. "Multitaskers were just lousy at everything," stated Professor Clifford Nass.[3]

It appears that the brain has limits and can only do so much at one time. With practice, the brain can become more efficient at carrying out multiple tasks, but performance is never as good as when the tasks are carried out independently.

Easwaran stated the following:

> "One-pointedness is a very vivid expression, because it assumes quite accurately that the mind is an internal instrument, which can either be brought to a single, powerful focus or left diffuse. Light, as you know, can be focused into an intense beam through the use of reflectors. But if holes and cracks lace the reflecting surface, the light will spill out in all directions. Similarly, when the mind is diffuse and many-pointed, it cannot be effective. The mental powers are divided up, and less remains available for the task at hand" (p.119).[4]

Many people argue, however, that if they stop multitasking, their work will not get done. We suggest testing one-pointed attention for yourself. We believe that in the long run, giving undivided attention to every task at hand will ultimately result in greater efficiency, fewer mistakes and bring a greater awareness to the quality of your life. Just as people have practiced multitasking, they must also practice one-pointedness and learn to focus their attention. We recognize that this concept clashes with our cultural values and our technology.

> Publilius Syrus, a Roman philosopher in 100 BC, said it simply:
> "To do two things at once is to do neither."[5]

In our culture we value doing more with less. Our technology of cell phones, pagers, and computer emails constantly interrupt our lives and like driving a car down the freeway, forces us to change lanes. We don't realize the amount of time it takes to bring attention back to what we were doing after an interruption. According to Gloria Mark, PhD, from the University of California at Irvine, the average corporate employee is interrupted every 2 minutes, switches tasks every 3 minutes and has maximum focus for only 12 minutes.[6] Researchers have coined a term "switch time" referring to the extra time it takes to refocus and return to a task after an interruption. Not

only is there the cost of losing time, there is also an emotional cost of feeling annoyed or frustrated.

Experiments with One-pointed Attention

RELATIONSHIPS: Practice giving your complete attention to the person you are talking to or who is talking to you. Try to listen without thinking of what you are going to say next. When faced with an interruption or distraction, give MORE attention to the person you are with.

MEALTIME: Give your entire attention to eating and tasting your food. Turn off the radio, TV, or other background noise. Notice what happens when you really taste what you are eating.

PROCRASTINATION: Practice one-pointed attention on a task you have neglected or postponed for a long time (such as cleaning the closet or drawers). Choose something that you find difficult or distasteful and give your entire attention to it. Set a timer and tell yourself you can quit after a half-hour, unless you find yourself involved in the task.

DIFFICULT PROJECTS: Choose a difficult project and bring your entire attention to it for a pre-determined period of time. Notice how your mind will try to distract you, but bring your attention back over and over until your time is up.

DRIVING OR RIDING: Give your attention to the act of driving a car. Turn off the radio or music. If you are a passenger on the bus, give your attention to the act of riding or looking out the window.

IN THE WORKPLACE: Give your attention to each task you are doing (even if for only a split second), whether it is talking on the phone with patients or with colleagues, researching a project, doing email, or filing documents.

MY EXPERIMENT (chosen task) to be one-pointed:

_____

Exercise: Writing the Mantram

Exercises, Experiments and Homework

Choose an activity with which to practice using one-pointed attention.

Practice using the mantram at different times and in different places.

As preparation for week 6, read Chapter 6 in this manual.

Read Chapter 6, pp. 135 - 159; Afterword, pp. 159 - 165; and The Eight-Point Program, pp. 166 - 168, in *Strength in the Storm.*

Chapter 6: Slowing Down and One-Pointed Attention for Making Healthy Choices

> "By slowing down we get a hold of our attention. We gain the capacity to make healthy choices of how we use our time, of where we place our resources and our love. I am not just talking about avoiding the 'rat race.' I am talking about a full life of an artistic beauty that has almost vanished from modern civilization, but is quite within the reach of everyone" (p.33).[1]

One-pointed attention and slowing down go hand-in-hand to help you make healthier, intentional choices. Each can be practiced internally in the mind or externally on a task or activity. For example, when we silently repeat a mantram in our minds, we are bringing our attention internally to our thoughts and thinking process. We cannot successfully repeat a mantram without focusing our attention on it. Once we notice that our mind drifts away and we bring it back to the mantram, we are also slowing down the thinking process. The greater our focus on the words or phrase of a mantram, the slower our thinking becomes.

We can also focus attention externally on one task or activity. Again, when we bring our entire attention to one single task, we are much better able to slow down our actions or to become more aware of what we are doing, and therefore, we can do it more skillfully with fewer mistakes!

In the same way, we can intentionally and internally slow down our thinking by repeating the mantram. As we slow down our thinking, we automatically slow down our external behaviors and habits. Think of an old-fashioned movie reel where pictures are lined up on the film, one by one, in little frames. When holding the film still, you can see each

individual picture. When the projector is turned on, however, and the reel begins to pick up speed, all the pictures move so quickly that they blend into one continuous action movie. You no longer see each separate frame. You lose the ability to see each moment as distinct and to act intentionally.

Mantram repetition, slowing down and one-pointed attention work synergistically to help us change unhealthy habits. A habit is simply the same behavior repeated over and over until it becomes automatic - until we do it without thinking! Before we can change, however, we need to become aware of the problem behavior and the thinking that supports it. We can then "take aim" at our thinking process and, with mantram repetition, create "pause time" to enable us to CHOOSE intentionally. This doesn't mean that we will easily or effortlessly make the healthy choices we know are good for us, but it does provide us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on the consequences of our actions.

For example, Mike loves Häagen-Dazs ice cream and found himself looking forward to eating a pint of it every Friday night before bed. It had become a weekly ritual and his reward for a hard day's work. It also had the unwanted side-effects of weight gain and increased cholesterol that Mike didn't need. Several pounds later, Mike decided he would give up his weekly ice cream, but he found it wasn't as easy as he thought it would be.

As he drove past the grocery store on his way home, his mind began running through its various arguments: "Aw, go on and have some ice cream. A little bit won't hurt. You've worked so hard and you deserve a reward. You can exercise later and so on." These thoughts had become a habit, just as his behavior of eating ice cream had become a weekly ritual.

Regular mantram practice helped to break this thought pattern. Each time Mike's mind drifted into wanting ice cream, he lifted his focus off the ice cream and returned his attention to his mantram. Giving up his weekly ice cream might have been nearly impossible if Mike hadn't been practicing

mantram repetition, slowing down and one-pointedness in the prior weeks. The awareness he gained by using the mantram gave him the ability to recognize that his mind had gotten "stuck" like a car in one line of traffic; it also helped him to "change lanes" and get out of trouble. Too often we feel incapable of re-directing our attention, when in fact, it is no different from exercising our physical muscled by lifting weights. Each time we gently and firmly bring our attention back to repeating the mantram, we are automatically slowing our thoughts and putting ourselves in the driver's seat. We are building the muscle of our minds to create healthier habits and make wiser decisions related to diet, sleep, work, relationships and exercise.

Dealing with Unhealthy Habits: Writing the Mantram

People who have used food, drugs, or alcohol to cope with life stressors most likely need some kind of physical activity to engage in when working to stop an addiction. Mantram writing may be the answer because it is easily available and requires the attention of one's mind and body. Writing line after line can become a soothing form of escape from past memories of drinking or drugging.

Remember that mantram repetition helps to bring us into the present moment and create "pause time." Similarly, mantram writing creates an even greater, more tangible experience of being in the present moment because one must concentrate and focus on the writing, letter after letter.

To deal with deep-seated habits or harmful addictions, we suggest the following:

- Use mantram writing as a form of substitution and way to transform thinking. Writing the mantram can be a very useful tool in a variety of ways, particularly for those who struggle with addictions.

- Keep a mantram notebook handy in the car or purse, at home or at work and practice writing it in for 5 minutes or more. This kind of discipline can reap large rewards.

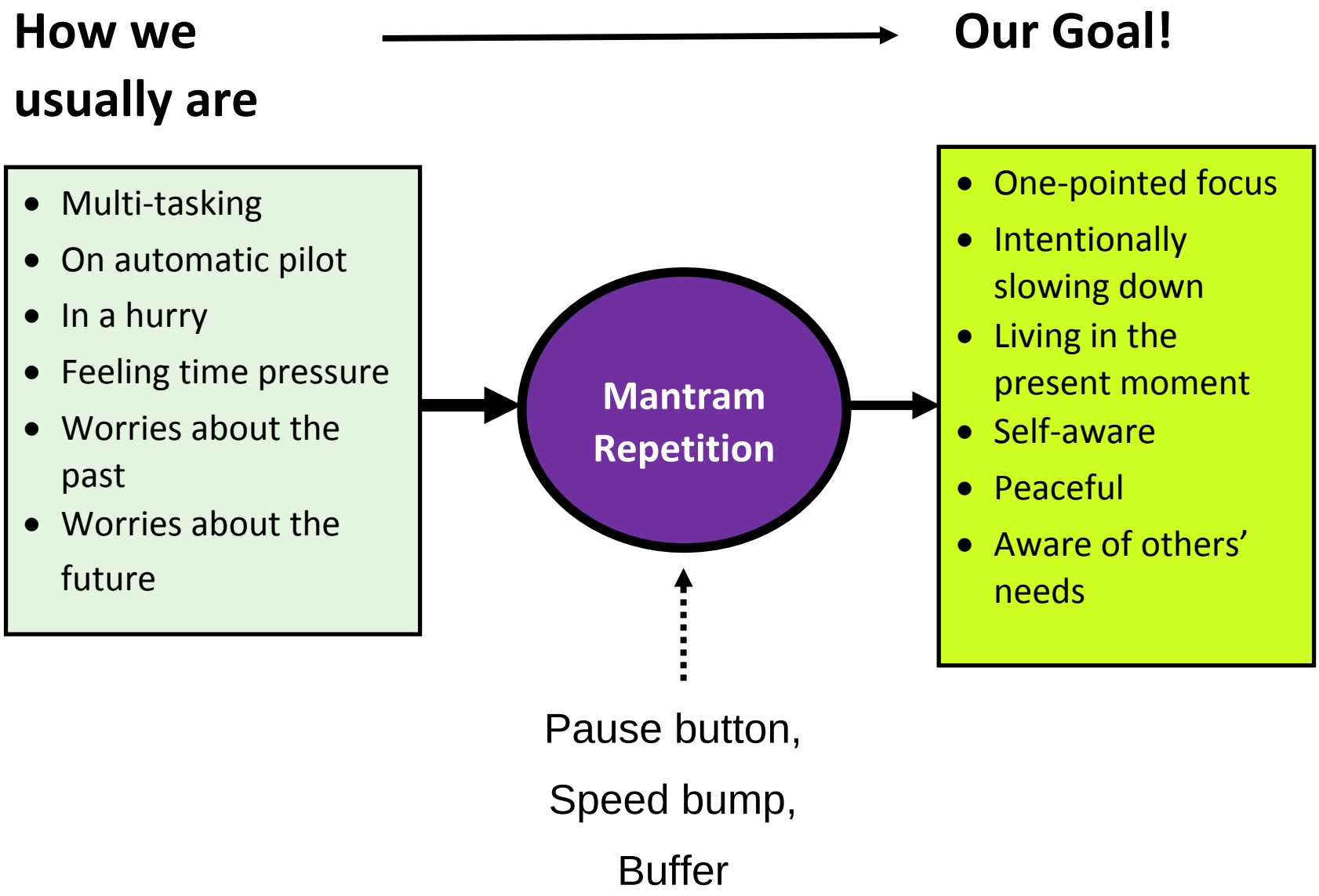
- Try writing the mantram with different colored marking pens or paper. Use writing as a form of relaxation or art. Use it to buy some time before making a decision.

- List your addiction, problem, worry, or concern at the top of the page and write mantrams for it. Sometimes we feel incapable of problem-solving and our minds need a break. Mantram writing can provide a respite from the noise and struggle in our minds by becoming the object of our focus if even for just a few minutes.

- Practice BOTH slowing down and one-pointed attention in everything you do and repeat the mantram as much as you can to help you make healthier choices.

- Notice when you are speeded up and multitasking and evaluate how you feel at the end of the day. Then compare that feeling to when you are moving slowly, intentionally and with focused attention. You are conserving energy when you are living with your full attention on those things that are your highest priorities in life.

- Set a time for reflection during the day - an alarm or a specific time (e.g., 10:00 am). Monitor what you are doing and whether you are speeded up, multitasking, making choices, or just reacting. If you are speeded up, take a few moments and write your mantram for one-half of a page of paper. When you finish, make a choice about how you will slow down and/or focus. Repeat this one or more times a day.


How we usually are
Our Goal!
Multi-tasking
On automatic pilot
In a hurry
Feeling time pressure
Worries about the past
Worries about the future
Mantram Repetition
One-pointed focus
Intentionally slowing down
Living in the present moment
Self-aware
Peaceful
Aware of others' needs
Pause button,
Speed bump,
Buffer

Exercise: Writing the Mantram

Exercises, Experiments and Homework

Begin to practice both slowing down and one-pointed attention in your daily life. Be aware of making healthy, intentional choices.

As preparation for week 7, read Chapter 7 in the manual and do the exercise on page 53 before class.

Review Chapter 5, pp. 106 - 133, in *Strength in the Storm*.

Chapter 7: Making the Mantram Part of Your Life

There are several ways to help you make mantram repetition a part of your life. Over time and with lots of practice, your mantram will simply pop into your head. But you must practice repeating it regularly for this to happen. Each of the following situations or activities can become a reminder for you to use your mantram. Included are some tips that will help you remember to practice.

- **While you are walking . . .**
  "One of the best times to repeat the mantram is while you are walking, especially if you walk briskly. The rhythm of your footsteps - the rhythm of the mantram - and the rhythm of your breathing all harmonize to soothe and invigorate the body and mind. Breathing is closely connected with your state of mind. People who are tense or angry breathe rapidly and irregularly; those who are calm, loving, and secure breathe smoothly, slowly, and deeply. A brisk walk helps to make your breathing rhythm deep and even, and the mantram will help to calm your mind" (p.54).[1]

- **While waiting . . . in line, for an elevator, on hold on telephone, etc.**
  "The little waits and delays that life is so full of are all opportunities to repeat the mantram. In the morning, when you're waiting for the coffee to perk, you can repeat the mantram instead of staring blankly at the wall. When you are standing in line at the bank or the supermarket, the mantram will make the wait seem shorter, and your patience will help those around you, too. When you are waiting for an interview, or for the doctor to come in, the mantram can save you a good deal of anxiety. In all these cases, you are putting your time to better use than if you were letting your mind run on about what might be troubling it. The mantram has the power to turn fear into fearlessness, anger into compassion, and hatred into love" (pp.53-54).[2]

- **During daily hygiene (brushing teeth, combing hair, etc.)**
- **While putting on your seatbelt**
- **Before going to sleep**
- **While in the presence of a difficult or rude person**.

Take a moment and think about your own life. What are some activities that you do EVERY single day? List them here and begin to use them as a reminder to repeat your mantram.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

There are only two times to use your mantram:
When you need it, and
when you don't.

Remember Ways to Use Your Mantram

While waiting

- For a job interview, or in a grocery or ticket line
- For the bus, plane, train, taxi, or other transportation
- For a doctor's appointment or lab tests
- For people who are late

To redirect wandering attention back to routine or "everyday" tasks such as:

- Washing dishes, sweeping, vacuuming, dusting
- Raking, gardening, watering plants
- Brushing teeth, combing hair, bathing or showering
- Digging, hauling, painting

While exercising

- Walking or jogging, swimming or bike riding
- Doing any repeated exercise

When dealing with annoying situations

- Getting cut off in traffic
- Tackling an unpleasant job
- Struggling with insomnia or nightmares
- Dealing with difficult people
- While on hold on the telephone
- When bored

Other times

- Before meals or going to sleep
- While in the presence of a dying person
- While dealing with pain, illness, or surgery
- When dealing with likes or dislikes
- For ruminating thoughts and little compulsions or addictions

To manage unwanted emotions

- Depression
- Fear
- Resentment
- Greed
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Impatience
- Jealousy
- Anger
- Guilt
- Irritability

Detached Reflection and Redirected Determination

Another method of keeping your practice going is to evaluate its benefits. Take a moment at the end of the day, and with no judgment or self-criticism, evaluate how your day has gone.

The most effective way to evaluate your mantram practice is to reflect on the rest of your life when you are not using your mantram.

- Have you been patient?
- Have you been focused?
- Have you been intentional?
- Have you made healthy choices?

We can't change our behavior unless we are aware of what needs changing. So by taking a moment for non-judgmental or detached reflection, we can evaluate what we liked and didn't like about our choices each day.

After reflecting on the following, ask yourself:

- What did I do well?
- What areas can I improve upon?
- Could I have used my mantram and reacted differently?

1. Choose one thing that you plan to change and one behavior you can do differently next time.
2. Don't dwell on your shortcomings or mistakes, but rather take that energy and redirect it toward a great determination to change.

Exercise: Writing the Mantram

Exercises, Experiments and Homework

Try to practice one-pointed attention, slowing down and mantram repetition in your daily life.

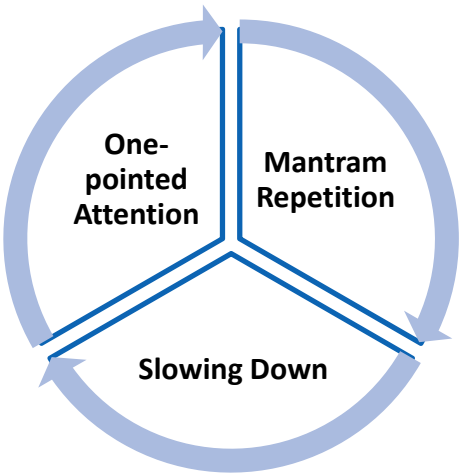
Write your mantram or take a “mantram walk” this week.

See **Appendix D** and try your hand at “mantram art.” Write your mantram in the empty spaces of these designs using different colored pens. This practice can engage your mind (with the colors of the pens and by repeating your mantram), while also engaging in a physical activity by handwriting. Experiment with writing fast or slow. Practice as if this is a one-pointed attention project.

As preparation for week 8, read Chapter 8 in the manual.

Chapter 8: Putting It All Together

If we have been practicing these tools of mantram repetition, slowing down, and one-pointed attention every day for several weeks, we have by now experienced how these tools complement and reinforce each other for stress reduction.



We discover the value of this "portable stress buster" because it can be utilized throughout the day. We begin to see how circumstances outside ourselves do not cause our feelings. We realize there are some things that are truly out of our control, and it is useless to waste our energy feeling upset about them.

We also begin to see how much energy we expend avoiding the things we dislike and pursuing the things we like. Over time, we can develop a greater acceptance of "what is" and we can change our perspective to conserve energy and feel more vitalized. Victor Frankl said it best:

> "When all things are taken from you, you still have a choice about your attitude."[1]

> "A tremendous amount of our vital energy is squandered in the vacillations of the mind as it swings towards what it likes and away from what it doesn't like. Most of us are so conditioned to go after what we like and avoid what we dislike that we do not even realize how enormous the problem is. When we are caught up in likes and dislikes, in strong opinions and rigid habits, we cannot work at our best, and we cannot know any real security either. We live at the mercy of external circumstances: if things go our way, we get elated; if things do not go our way, we get depressed. It is only the mature person - the man or woman who is not conditioned by compulsive likes and dislikes, habits and opinions - who is really free in life" (p.77).[2]

By slowing down, one pointed attention and practicing the mantram we can gain the ability to do activities with a better attitude that in the past were distasteful or boring. This approach allows us to conserve vital energy and not be so easily upset in life. Living with the restraints of being driven by likes and dislikes is a lack of freedom. Freedom is the chance to make a choice of where to place your energy.

Exercise: Overcoming Rigidity

Identify and write in the left column those things, experiences or people in life that you enjoy and are drawn to. In the right column list your dislikes or things that drain your vitality.

LIKES/ INCREASES VITALITY	DISLIKES/ DRAINS VITALITY

"Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our happiness."[1]

Keep It Going

We all know that any behavior is hard to change, so maintaining group support is extremely useful to keep our commitment to mantram repetition, slowing down and one-pointed attention. Remember - this practice is a journey, not a destination. There are always new ways to integrate mantram repetition into your life and it is fun to get new ideas from others.

Here are some suggestions to help you keep it going:

1. We recommend that you create a "buddy system" or weekly support group for your mantram practice. The old saying, "out of sight is out of mind" really applies here. Even if you have been using a mantram for several years, it is very easy to forget to say it. We have found that telling "mantram stories" is valuable and fun. If you have made some friends with someone in this course, set up a way to keep in contact via phone, email, lunch, a walk, or any other means.

2. Re-read your manual and re-do the exercises and self-assessment to see if you have improved in slowing down or practicing one-pointed attention over time.

3. Reward yourself - specify what you will do if you meet your goals: "If I have continued with daily or almost daily mantram use, I will treat myself to a magazine that I really like but rarely buy for myself."

4. Make a contract with yourself:
   a. What you are going to do to keep using the mantram:

      _____

      _____

      _____

b. What reminder will you have to monitor your progress?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Example of Self-Contract

a. What you are going to do to keep using the mantram?

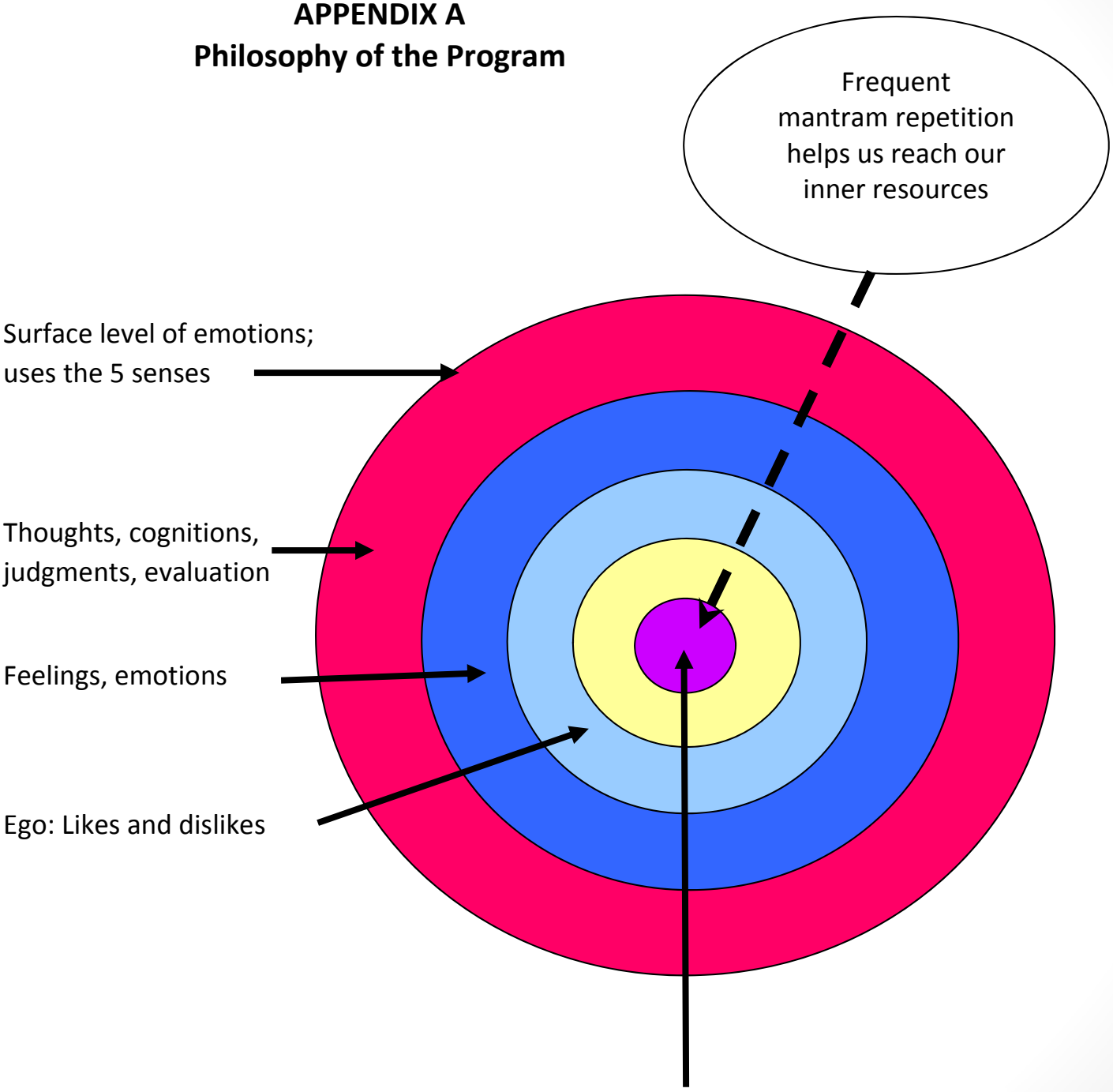
Put a check-mark on my calendar at 3 months after the last class as a reminder to assess my mantram practice at that time.

b. What reminder will you do to check/monitor your progress?

Use post-it notes in the bathroom, on the calendar, and in my purse (or wallet) to remind me to slow down and repeat my mantram.

Exercise: Writing the Mantram

APPENDIX A
Philosophy of the Program



"Inner Core of Resources,"
or natural state of being human:
Peace, Love, Compassion, Kindness, Goodness, Wholeness, Healing, Generosity, Altrusim, Vitality and Patience

APPENDIX B
Tracking Log for Mantram Use

Name: _____ Dates of this week: _____

Days:	*Friday*	*Saturday*	*Sunday*	*Monday*	*Tuesday*	*Wednesday*	*Thursday*
Dates:							
Number of Times Remembered per Day							
Used for Sleep? **Yes or No**							

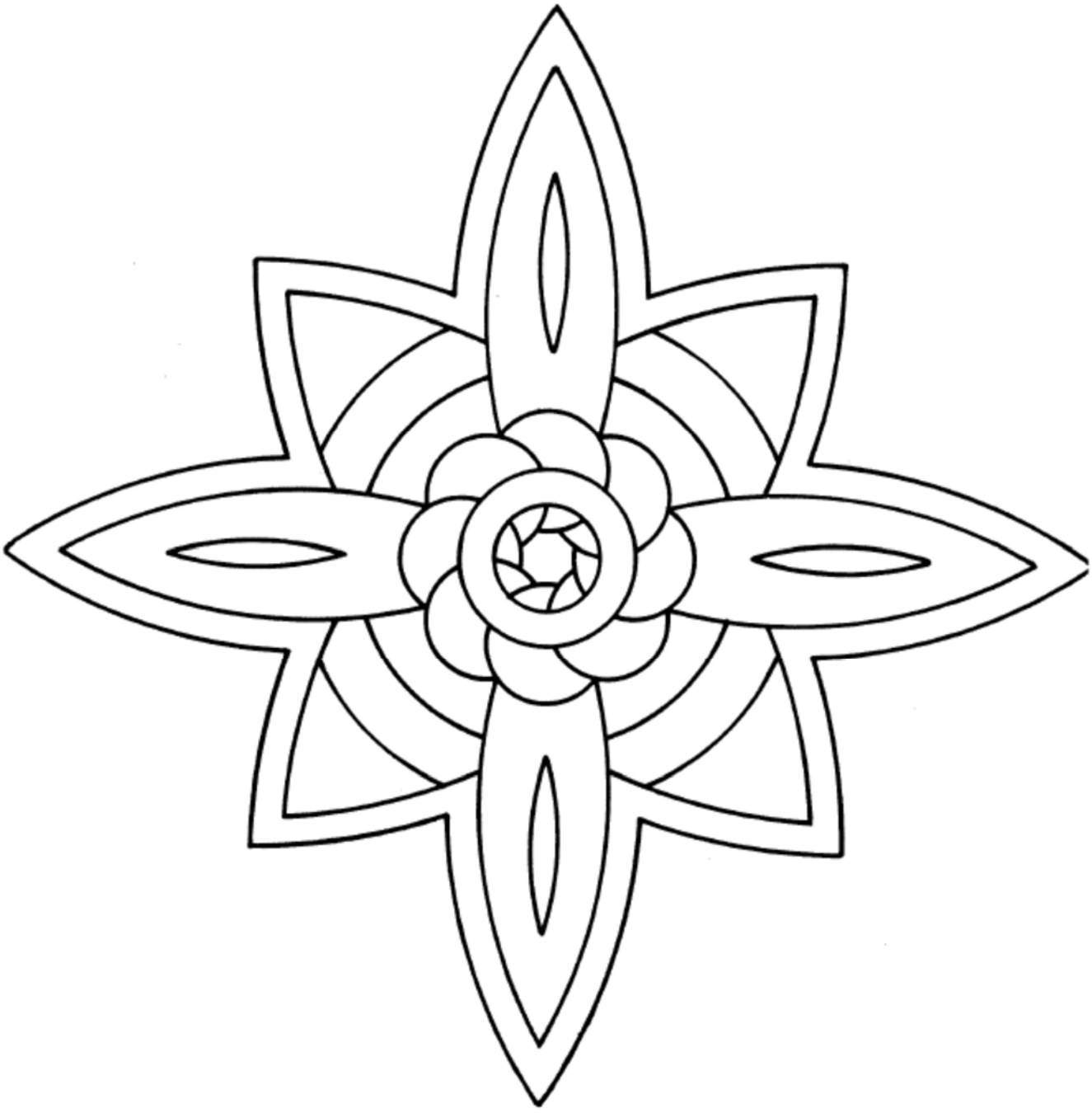
Comments:

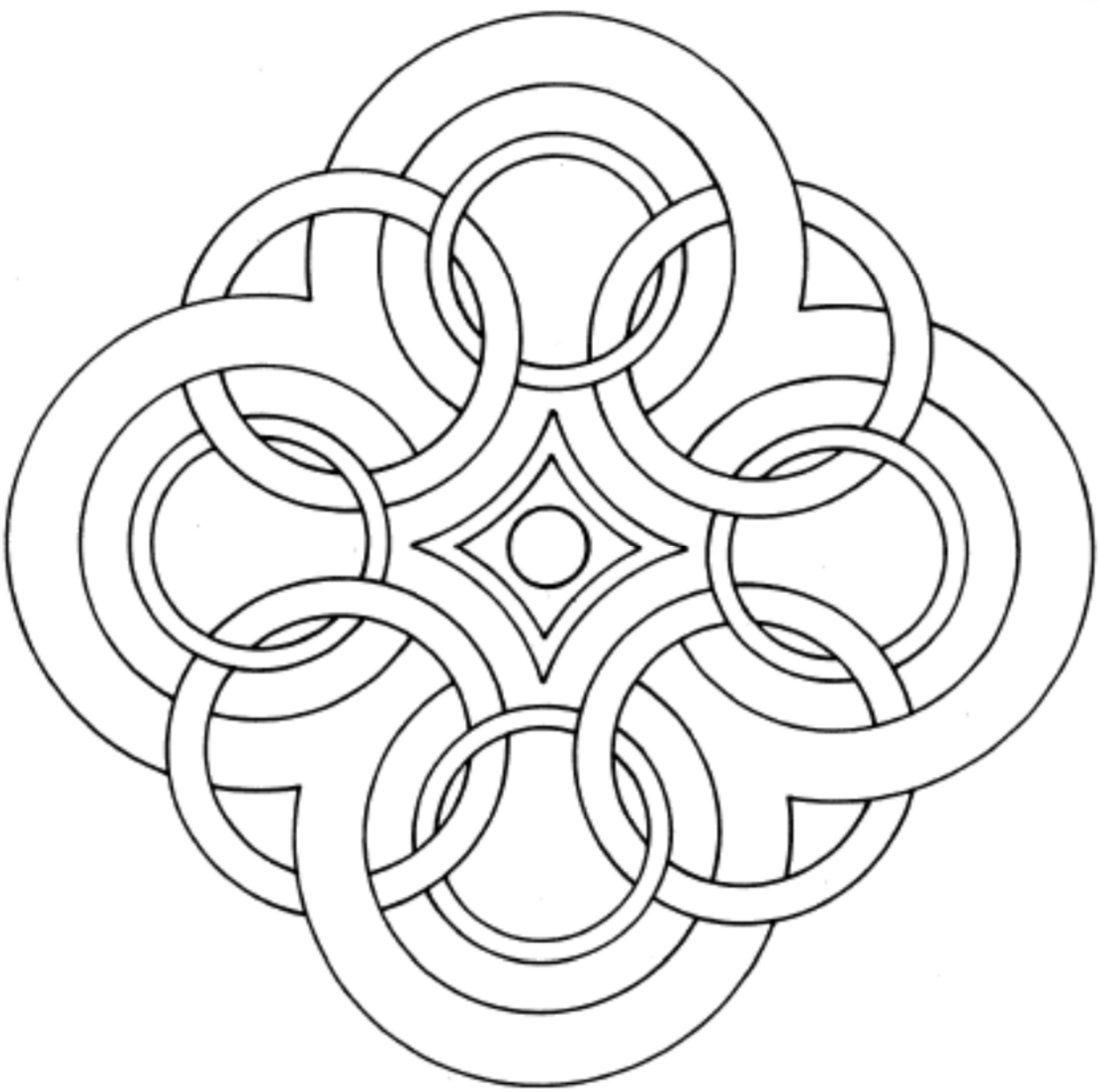
APPENDIX C
VALUES IDENTIFICATION

Values are ideas or beliefs about what is most important in our lives. Values support how we live and what we live for. Values are like the unspoken forces behind many of our actions and decisions. The goal of "values identification" is to become fully conscious of what we value and how we express it in words, thoughts and actions. You can be more self-directed and effective when you know which values you choose to live by as an adult and which ones get priority over others. Identify your values first, then rank your top three to five.

Being with people
Being loved
Being married
Having a special partner
Having companionship
Loving someone
Taking care of others
Having someone's help
Having a close family
Having good friends
Being liked
Being popular
Getting people's approval
Being appreciated
Being treated fairly
Being admired
Being independent
Being courageous
Having things in control
Having self-control
Being emotionally stable
Having self-acceptance
Having pride or dignity
Being well organized
Being competent
Learning and knowing a lot
Striving for perfection
Making a contribution to the world
Fighting injustice
Living ethically
Being a good parent (or child)
Preserving your roots
Having financial security
Holding on to what you have
Being safe physically
Being free from pain
Not getting taken advantage of
Having it easy
Being comfortable
Avoiding boredom
Having fun
Enjoying sensual pleasures
Looking good
Being physically fit
Being healthy
Having prized possessions
Being a creative person
Having deep feelings
Growing as a person
Living fully
"Smelling the flowers"
Having a purpose
Achieving highly
Being productively busy
Having enjoyable work
Having an important position
Making money
Being a spiritual person
Having a relationship with God
Having peace and quiet
Making a home

APPENDIX D
MANTRAM ART





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Chapter 7: Making the Mantram a Part of Your Life

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Web Sites for More Information on Mantram Repetition

Dr. Jill Bormann's Personal Mantram Web Site: www.jillbormann.com

Articles by Dr. Jill Bormann on MRP:
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Bormann+JE

Blue Mountain Center of Meditation and Nilgiri Press with Eknath Easwaran's work: http://www.easwaran.org

Wikipedia: The Mantram Handbook:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mantram_Handbook

Vets Find Mantram Repetition Helps PTSD Symptoms – YouTube
(KPBS April 3, 2012)
This is a 5-minute video on how Veterans with PTS are using mantram repetition for symptom management.
Online at: http://www.kpbs.org/news/2012/apr/03/vets-find-mantram-repetition-helps-ptsd-symptoms/

Need to Know (PBS June 22, 2012)**:**
This is a 30-minute video about 3 VA nurses in San Diego caring for Veterans. Mantram repetition is shown in the middle of the video.
Online at: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/video/video-nursing-the-wounded/14125/

"Mantram Technique Benefits Veterans with PTSD": VA *Research Currents* (May 2013)
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VA Research Communications
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